



Afternoon Alert - Monday, March 5, 2018

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HEADLINES

Noon news

NHK led with a report on the opening of the National People's Congress in China. NTV and TBS led with reports on the opposition camp's grilling of the Abe administration at the Upper House Budget Committee over flaws in work hours data compiled by the Labor Ministry. TV Asahi and Fuji-TV gave top play to reports that Japanese makeup artist Kazuhiro Tsuji together with two colleagues has won this year's Academy Award for best makeup and hairstyling for his work on "Darkest Hour."

ECONOMY

Japan hoping to consult with U.S. on steel import restrictions

Nikkei reported online on press remarks this morning by Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga, who commented on the Trump administration's moves to impose heavy duties on foreign steel and aluminum imports by saying: "We plan to hold talks with the United States after fully examining the proposed measures and their effects on Japanese corporations." The government spokesman disclosed that Foreign Minister Kono has conveyed to USTR Lighthizer Tokyo's concern about the planned imposition of tariffs.

The daily separately took up White House Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy Director Peter Navarro's appearance on a Sunday TV talk show, in which he suggested that certain foreign steel and/or aluminum imports may be exempted from the across-the-board tariffs that the administration plans to impose. "There will be an exemption procedure for particular cases where we need to have exemptions so that business can move forward," said Navarro, adding however that "at this point in time, there will be no country exclusions." Nikkei took his remarks to mean that the USG may choose to exempt from the proposed restrictions certain high value-added items that U.S. makers cannot produce, such as the lightweight steel that Japanese manufacturers are supplying.

According to the daily, Commerce Secretary Ross disclosed on a TV program on Sunday that President Trump has held conversations with a number of the world leaders on the subject. He also said: "I know he's talking about a fairly broad brush. I have not heard him describe particular exemptions just yet."

- [Japan's aluminum, steel have "no impact on U.S. national security"](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Editorial: U.S. metal tariffs move a short-sighted measure that could trigger retaliation](#) (The Japan News)
- [Editorial: Does the U.S. administration want to risk a trade war?](#) (Nikkei)
- [Editorial: PM Abe should urge President Trump to exercise restraint](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Industry wary of trade stagnation](#) (The Japan News)
- [METI official says TPP 11 to put pressure on China in RCEP talks](#) (Sankei)
- [Goods whose import to Japan is suspended rise 18%](#) (Nikkei)
- [Toyota creates AI unit headed by ex-Google robotics specialist](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Kuroda says BOJ likely to consider exiting easing around FY 2019](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan gives up idea to store unused nuclear fuel materials in 1 place](#) (Kyodo News)

INTERNATIONAL

Former President Obama to visit Japan

Fuji TV reported that former President Obama is likely to visit Tokyo on March 24 or 25 at the invitation of a private Japanese organization, saying that he is expected to deliver a speech on his "world without nuclear weapons" initiative. Noting that arrangements are being made for him to hold a meeting with Prime Minister Abe, the broadcaster predicted that they might exchange views on North Korea's nuclear and missile development.

- [RCEP ministerial meeting makes progress but gaps remain](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Editorial: Japan should work to help ease US-China tensions](#) (The Mainichi)
- [U.S.-China ties "far from stable" over regional issues: report](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan protests PyeongChang Paralympic website's rendering of Takeshima, Sea of Japan](#) (Sankei)
- [Editorial: Anti-Japan sentiment in Moon's speech is a distortion of history](#) (The Japan News)
- [Gov't to help Japanese firms expand into Africa](#) (The Japan News)
- [Japan to pick Aichi Pref. for G-20 foreign ministers' meeting](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Abe charms old friends amid Beijing's growing influence](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

SECURITY

- [Japan backs out of plan to develop fighter jet on its own](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Okinawa Gov. urges newly appointed minister to reduce U.S. base burden](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Okinawa affairs minister visits school where U.S. military helicopter's window fell](#) (Asahi)

- [Ministry to submit legal amendments to enhance security of IoT devices](#) (Sankei)

POLITICS

Upper House party policy chiefs discuss work-style reform

In NHK's Nichiyo Toron Sunday debate show, policy chiefs of the ruling and opposition parties at the Upper House discussed work-style reform. The LDP's Takemi stressed the importance of introducing a new work system for "highly skilled professionals." Fukuyama of the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan and Furukawa of the Party of Hope argued that work-style reform and related legislation should be discussed more carefully in response to data flaws found in a Labor Ministry survey of work hours. Inoue of the Japanese Communist Party insisted that the Abe administration should give up on submitting the legislation. Katayama of Nippon Ishin criticized the survey as sloppy but welcomed the idea of introducing a discretionary work system.

- [Prime minister's schedule on March 2, 2018](#) (Nikkei)
- [Prime minister's schedule on March 3, 2018](#) (Nikkei)
- [Prime minister's schedule on March 4, 2018](#) (Nikkei)
- [LDP action plan to call for strong push to revise Constitution: draft](#) (The Japan Times)
- [Race to the top: The 2018 LDP leadership contest / Kishida — Blend of offense and defense](#) (The Japan News)
- [Race to the top: The 2018 LDP leadership contest / Shinzo Abe — Constitutional revision needs crushing victory](#) (The Japan News)
- [LDP heavyweights Ishiba, Nikai hold meeting](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Shimajiri reappointed as assistant to Okinawa affairs minister](#) (Asahi)
- [Editorial: Work reform bill was questionable even before data scandal](#) (The Mainichi)

OPINION POLLS

- [69% say no need to pass work-style reform bill during current Diet session, Kyodo News poll](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Highlights of the February 2018 Jiji Press Public Opinion Poll](#) (Jiji Press Public Opinion Poll Bulletin)

SCIENCE

- [Int'l cooperation agreed on Lunar, Mars probes at space forum](#) (Kyodo News)

EDUCATION

- [K. International spelling whiz wins Japan Times Bee](#) (The Japan Times)

SOCIETY

Emperor, Empress to visit Okinawa

All broadcasters reported in their noon news programs that the Imperial Household Agency announced on Monday that Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko will make a three-day visit to Okinawa from March 27. According to the agency, the imperial couple will honor the war dead by

visiting a WWII memorial in Itoman on the main island of Okinawa and travel to Japan's westernmost island of Yonaguni for the first time before visiting the city of Tomigusuku on the main island.

Proposals for labor reform based on artificial intelligence

Saturday's "NHK Special" focused on labor reform in Japan, using an artificial intelligence program called "Hiroshi" developed by NHK. An NHK announcer and a popular TV personality talked with experts about how to prevent long working hours, increase work efficiency, and other topics based on proposals made by the AI program. Based on the analysis of 50 million academic papers, 2.5 million news articles, and the personal data of about 210,000 people, the AI program came to the conclusion that people who don't pay much attention to the little vexations of life have high levels of satisfaction in their jobs. The AI program also concluded that it is important to allow workers to keep flexible work schedules so they can concentrate better and improve their efficiency.

Danger of tsunami waves on rivers

Sunday's "NHK Special" reported on the danger of tsunami waves traveling up rivers, saying that the giant tsunami that hit the coast of the Tohoku region in 2011 surged up many rivers at speeds of around 40 km per hour. The program said many people who lived in places distant from the ocean lost their lives due to tsunami waves traveling up rivers, which many had not anticipated

